

MINUTE

‘A’ & ‘B’

Special Services Committee
Main Hall, Town Hall, Lerwick
Tuesday 10 May 2011 at 10.00am

Present:

E L Fullerton	L Angus
L F Baisley	J Budge
A T Doull	A T J Cooper
A G L Duncan	F B Grains
I J Hawkins	R S Henderson
J H Henry	W H Manson
C H J Miller	R C Nickerson
F A Robertson	G Robinson
J G Simpson	C L Smith
A S Wishart	J W G Wills

Apologies:

A J Cluness	A J Hughson
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In Attendance:

A Buchan, Chief Executive
H Budge, Head of Schools
A Cogle, Service Manager – Administration
M Craigie, Head of Service - Transport
B Crook, Community Work Manager
M Gordon, Communications Assistant - Blueprint
A Edwards, Quality Improvement Manager
J Edwards, Quality Improvement Officer
I Halcrow, Head of Service - Roads
A Jamieson, Head of Service - Housing
K Johnston, Solicitor
T Morton, Communications Adviser
M Moss, Quality Improvement Manager
E Park, Transport Strategy Officer
R Sim, Quality Improvement Officer
M Spence, Quality Improvement Officer
J Smith, Head of Service – Organisational Development & ICT
J Thomason, Management Accountant
M Thomson, Senior Assistant Accountant
L Geddes, Committee Officer

Chairperson

Mrs E L Fullerton, Chairperson of the Committee, presided.

Circular

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

It was questioned whether it would be in order for all four schools to be dealt with together, as some Members felt that there were similar issues relating to each of them.

The Solicitor advised that each report would have to be considered individually and on its own merits, and that it was not possible to consider all four together.

43/11 **Blueprint for Education in Shetland: Decision on Uyeasound Primary School**

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Schools (Appendix 1).

The Head of Schools outlined that her responsibilities were to ensure that the Council provides a high quality education for every child in Shetland in order to enable them to reach their full potential. The Council also had a duty to ensure that the service met best value criteria. The Schools Service was able to demonstrate that the Council did deliver a good service overall, with evidence of good attainment levels and good outcomes. However the Council's model of education could not demonstrate equality of opportunity or efficiency in delivery. In 2007 she had been tasked with developing a modern education blueprint. A member/officer working group had been established to take this forward, and had reported regularly to Members. In June 2010 it had been agreed to consider the primary school estate. It was currently operating at less than half its capacity, with only 46% of available spaces occupied. School rolls had declined by 22%, but only two single-teacher schools had closed in that time. In order to help secure equality of provision for all Shetland pupils, attempts had been made to address a more efficient, cost-effective and sustainable model of delivery. The educational wellbeing, health and safety of all pupils was a prime consideration, and there was no question that pupils would be put at risk. All travel times were within times that were already being travelled in Shetland, and safety audits had been carried out with regard to transport.

She went on to point out that the mechanisms through which the proposals had come to the Committee were very prescriptive and laid down in legislation, and Legal Services had confirmed that the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 had been complied with. There were some amendments to the reports issued earlier, and copies of these amendments (attached as Appendix 1a) were tabled and available on the Council website. The first amendment related to a change of email address for Scottish Ministers (now 'schoolclosure@scotland.gsi.gov.uk'), and a replacement page had been issued for each report. The second amendment related to the proposed closure of Burravoe Primary School, and she would refer to this when Members considered this report.

The Head of Schools then thanked staff, Members, the Member/Officer Working Group, and pupils, staff, parents and others who had responded to the consultation consultation process.

She then went on to summarise the main terms of the report and highlighted the number of written responses received. She said that she considered the proposal would be of educational benefit to pupils, and that HMIE had confirmed this assessment. She pointed out that the proposal specifically would provide the best possible arrangements for the children of Unst to learn together, engage in social activities with others of a similar age and stage, have more regular access to specialist classes and staff, improve transition arrangements, and that learning opportunities would be improved within a spacious and fit-for-purpose learning environment. She added that she had listened to and examined all the issues and concerns raised, and she was of the view that all these issues and concerns could be addressed.

She referred to the annual revenue savings referred to in paragraph 6.4 of the report, and confirmed that the Finance Service had certified these as correct. The proposal was to save 15% over the Schools Service revenue budgets over a three-year period, and the full range of proposals presented at today's meeting would add to the overall savings target without impacting on service delivery. In conclusion, the proposals met all the legal obligations on statutory service provision as well as the policy direction set with regard to the principles of the Blueprint for Education, and she recommended the proposals to the Committee.

In response to a query, the Head of Schools confirmed that the Schools Service based its teacher/pupil ratios (for single teacher schools) on one FTE teacher per 19 pupils, and that the current cost per FTE primary teacher was £51,687. It was pointed out that the teacher/pupil ratios for Bells Brae and Sound exceeded this ratio. The Head of Schools explained that both schools had 14 classes each, with school rolls of 308 and 320 respectively. The figures throughout Scotland with which comparisons were being drawn did not include management staff and additional support needs staff, but these staff had been included in the Shetland figures. Bells Brae also contained a special unit that required a higher staffing ratio. Both Sound and Bells Brae had one additional teacher above the national staffing ratio. Members had approved this in 2010 in order to implement the Scottish Government's commitment to class sizes for P1-P3.

Mrs C H J Miller moved that the Committee approve the recommendations in the report, and Dr J W G Wills seconded.

Mr J G Simpson moved, as an amendment, that the Committee agree to keep Uyeasound Primary School open, and Mrs L F Baisley seconded.

During the discussion that followed, Members speaking in support of the motion highlighted the following points:

- The Council, as an education authority, had a duty to provide an adequate education for the whole of Shetland, and the debate should focus on the educational benefits for all children in Shetland.
- The educational benefits for the Uyeasound Primary School pupils, and all pupils, had been well illustrated in paragraphs 5.3.4 and 5.3.5 of the report, and it was felt that the pupils would benefit accordingly. No 'disbenefit' could be demonstrated by the proposal. Specialist staff had prepared the report and HMle had endorsed their opinion that there were educational and social benefits.
- Smaller schools were not 'stand alone' schools and depended on neighbouring schools for their operation.
- HMle had stated that the proposal "...offers some benefits to the children directly affected by the proposal and more widely across Shetland Islands Council".
- The Accounts Commission had stated that the Council needed to demonstrate that it had the capacity to take difficult decisions and to operate in accordance with its own financial strategy.

- There were clear educational benefits, and also costs to every school in Shetland if the proposal was not approved. Schools were already facing budget cuts due to savings not being achieved by the closure of Skerries School secondary department, and it was irresponsible to try and keep more small schools open without identifying where the budgets would come from.
- The Council's policy to maintain its reserves at £250 million, as referred to in paragraph 2.5 of the report, had not been index-linked and should really stand at a figure nearer £300 million. Cuts in the Scottish Government budget had been delayed until the election had taken place, and it was anticipated there would be another £4-5 billion in spending cuts, which were likely to affect the Council.
- The Council had closed five primary schools in the South Mainland in the late 1960s. Although there had been representations at the time, it was now regarded as having been an extremely positive move. This was also consistent with the experience following the closure of Quarff Primary School recently. Districts in Shetland that had lost their schools in the past had not been reported as suffering from adverse economic or social impacts.
- Other local authorities in Scotland had made reductions to their school estate. Orkney Islands Council, which had comparable school rolls to Shetland, only has 17 schools, and they are seeking to close a further four schools. Orkney also has similar attainment levels to Shetland, demonstrating that fewer schools does not mean there is any detriment to the educational attainment of pupils.
- The Blueprint for Education Member/Officer Working Group had reported regularly to Members, and no criticism of the process, detail or principles involved had been received at those stages.
- Rural schools should be viable and robust. The advice from external consultants was that it was difficult to demonstrate educational value or merits for schools with a roll of less than 20, except for remote islands.

Members speaking in support of the amendment drew attention to the following points:

- The value of schools to small communities should not be underestimated, and they were often the 'heart and soul' of the community.
- Uyeasound was an industrious community with a thriving salmon industry that made a contribution to the Shetland economy. Therefore the community should be supported.
- If the proposal was approved, it was likely that it would cost the Council more to support the community through Economic Development than the savings it would achieve through closing the school.
- It was inappropriate to put a price on the needs of young children without an equal evaluation of the whole education system.

- The financial implications had been queried on a number of occasions and no satisfactory response had been received.
- There was concern that the responses to the consultation exercise had not been taken seriously.
- Parents had expressed concern regarding travelling times and how this would add to the school day. The rise in fuel costs means that estimates for travel costs will also rise.
- Alternatives to closure had not been fully considered, and consideration could be given to reducing equivalent teaching staff across Shetland which would be less damaging to the whole school estate.

The Head of Schools reminded Members that they should consider the effect of school closures on communities, and that they should base their decisions on the Consultation Report.

Mr A G L Duncan moved that voting take place by roll call, and the Committee unanimously agreed.

After summing up, voting accordingly took place by roll call, and the result was as follows:

Motion (Mrs C H J Miller)	Amendment (Mr J G Simpson)
Mr L Angus Mr J Budge Mr A G L Duncan Mrs E L Fullerton Mrs F B Grains Mr J H Henry Mr W H Manson Mrs C H J Miller Mr R C Nickerson Mr F A Robertson Mr G Robinson Dr J WG Wills Mr A S Wishart	Mrs L F Baisley Mr A T J Cooper Mr A T Doull Mrs I J Hawkins Mr R S Henderson Mr J G Simpson Mr C L Smith
13	7

Decision:

The Committee **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** that Shetland Islands Council approve:

1. education provision at Uyeasound Primary School be discontinued with effect from 07 October 2011 or as soon as possible thereafter
2. the pupils of Uyeasound Primary School continue their education at Baltasound Junior High School Primary Department, from 26 October 2011, or as soon as possible thereafter and, should the Proposal be approved:

3. note that the Scottish Ministers have a six week period from the date of that final decision to decide if they will call-in the Proposal so no action can be taken regarding implementation
4. the Head of Schools would work with pupils, parents and staff at Uyeasound Primary School and Baltasound Junior High School to develop a transition plan that would ensure an effective transition for pupils to the Baltasound Junior High School
5. the Head of Schools will ensure all staff will be properly consulted about their future, as will relevant trade unions. The individual wishes of each member of staff will be taken into consideration within the context of appropriate human resource policies and agreements.

44/11

Blueprint for Education in Shetland: Decision on Burravoe Primary School

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Schools (Appendix 2).

The Head of Schools summarised the main terms of the report, highlighting the number of written responses received. She said that she considered the proposal would be of educational benefit to pupils, and that HMle had confirmed this assessment. She pointed out that the proposal would specifically provide better opportunities for pupils to learn together and to have social interaction with others of similar ages, give more regular access to specialist classes and staff, offer improved transition arrangements, and pupils would benefit from improved learning opportunities within a spacious and fit-for-purpose learning environment. She added that she had listened to and examined all the issues and concerns raised, and was of the view that all these issues and concerns could be addressed. The proposal met all the legal obligations on statutory service provision as well as the policy direction set with regard to the principles of the Blueprint for Education, and she recommended the proposals to the Committee.

She referred Members to the financial implications contained in paragraph six of the report. She advised that an amendment to these costs (tabled and attached as Appendix 2a) had been required as it was now clear that the projected roll for Mid Yell Junior High School had increased to 49 pupils, thereby it would retain three teachers. An additional teacher would not be required if Burravoe Primary School moved to Mid Yell Junior High School and, as a result, the savings from closing Burravoe Primary School would increase from £58,397 to £110, 084. If the proposal was not approved, the reduction in funding for each pupil across Shetland would be £33.25 rather than £17.64 as stated.

In response to a query, she advised that pupils from both Burravoe and Cullivoe travelled to Mid Yell one afternoon per week to attend joint activities at the Leisure Centre, and to use the library facilities at Mid Yell Junior High School.

Mr J G Simpson moved that the Committee agree to keep Burravoe Primary School open, and Mr R S Henderson seconded.

Mrs C H J Miller moved, as an amendment, that the Committee approve the recommendations in the report, and Mr L Angus seconded.

During the discussion that followed, Members speaking in support of the motion highlighted the following points:

- The loss of the school would have a detrimental effect on a fragile and close-knit community. Schools in small rural communities were often regarded as the 'heart and soul of the community'.
- Young children would have to travel twice daily over one of the worst single-track roads in Shetland. Travel time would increase their school day to 7/8 hours, thereby reducing time spent at home with their families.
- Young children were being targeted to make savings instead of the whole education system being evaluated.
- The savings figures had been challenged at the Burravoe consultation meeting.
- The community had set up a number of groups that had been successful in securing external funding, and they should be supported. The Council had a policy to support rural communities.
- Abandoned school buildings would still result in an ongoing cost to the Council, and no suggestions had been made as to how they should be dealt with.
- It was a backward step to lose exemplary schools in order to facilitate standard provision across Shetland.

Members speaking in support of the amendment drew attention to the following points:

- Other children in Shetland were already travelling this distance to school, and many were travelling over a similar standard of road.
- The Council had invested money in a brand new fit-for-purpose school in Yell.
- The Schools Service had answered queries in relation to anticipated savings.
- Both the educational experience and opportunities for Burravoe pupils and Mid Yell Junior High School pupils would be enhanced, and there would be opportunities for extra-curricular activities.
- No detrimental impacts to communities where school closures had taken place in the past had been reported. It was also now generally accepted that these had been positive moves for the communities.
- Small rural schools depended on neighbouring schools for their operation.

- Sustainable economies were the ‘heart and soul’ of communities, not schools.
- The Council had a duty to provide equality of opportunity across Shetland.
- Failure to progress school closures would have a meaningful effect on all schools, with schools equipment budgets already being cut due to savings not being achieved by the closure of Skerries School secondary department. It was irresponsible to try and keep more small schools open without identifying where the budgets would come from.

Mr A G L Duncan moved that voting take place by roll call, and the Committee unanimously agreed.

After summing up, voting accordingly took place by roll call, and the result was as follows:

Motion (Mr J G Simpson)	Amendment (Mrs C H J Miller)
Mrs L F Baisley Mr A T J Cooper Mr A T Doull Mrs I J Hawkins Mr R S Henderson Mr J H Henry Mr F A Robertson Mr J G Simpson	Mr L Angus Mr J Budge Mr A G L Duncan Mrs E L Fullerton Mrs F B Grains Mr W H Manson Mrs C H J Miller Mr R C Nickerson Mr G Robinson Mr C L Smith Dr J WG Wills Mr A S Wishart
8	12

Decision:

The Committee **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** that Shetland Islands Council approve:

1. education provision at Burravoe Primary School be discontinued with effect from 07 October 2011 or as soon as possible thereafter
2. the pupils of Burravoe Primary School continue their education at Mid Yell Junior High School Primary Department, from 26 October 2011, or as soon as possible thereafter and, should the Proposal be approved:
3. note that the Scottish Ministers have a six week period from the date of that final decision to decide if they will call-in the Proposal so no action can be taken regarding implementation
4. the Head of Schools would work with pupils, parents and staff at

Burravoe Primary School and Mid Yell Junior High School to develop a transition plan that would ensure an effective transition for pupils to the Mid Yell Junior High School Primary Department

5. the Head of Schools will ensure all staff will be properly consulted about their future, as will relevant trade unions. The individual wishes of each member of staff will be taken into consideration within the context of appropriate human resource policies and agreements.

Mrs C H J Miller advised that she intended to request that the Council agree that the Roads Service be requested to prioritise the erection of barriers at appropriate places along the East Yell road.

The Chairperson advised she had to leave the meeting to attend another engagement and that, in the absence of a Vice-Chairperson, she nominated Mr J G Simpson, as Vice Convener, to assume the role of Chairperson.

Mr A S Wishart moved that Mr W H Manson, as Education Spokesperson, should instead assume the role of Chairperson and Mr L Angus seconded.

Mr J G Simpson advised that he was in agreement that Mr W H Manson should assume the role of Chairperson, and the Committee agreed.

Mr W H Manson assumed the role of Chairperson.

The Committee adjourned at 11.35am.

The Committee reconvened at 11.50am.

Present:

W H Manson	L Angus
L F Baisley	J Budge
A T Doull	A T J Cooper
A G L Duncan	F B Grains
I J Hawkins	R S Henderson
J H Henry	C H J Miller
R C Nickerson	F A Robertson
G Robinson	J G Simpson
C L Smith	A S Wishart
J W G Wills	

In Attendance:

A Buchan, Chief Executive
H Budge, Head of Schools
A Cogle, Service Manager – Administration
M Craigie, Head of Service - Transport
B Crook, Community Work Manager
M Gordon, Communications Assistant - Blueprint
A Edwards, Quality Improvement Manager
J Edwards, Quality Improvement Officer

I Halcrow, Head of Service - Roads
A Jamieson, Head of Service - Housing
K Johnston, Solicitor
T Morton, Communications Adviser
M Moss, Quality Improvement Manager
E Park, Transport Strategy Officer
R Sim, Quality Improvement Officer
M Spence, Quality Improvement Officer
J Smith, Head of Service – Organisational Development & ICT
J Thomason, Management Accountant
M Thomson, Senior Assistant Accountant
L Geddes, Committee Officer

45/11 **Blueprint for Education in Shetland: Decision on North Roe Primary School**
The Committee considered a report by the Head of Schools (Appendix 3).

The Head of Schools summarised the main terms of the report, highlighting the number of written responses received. She said that she considered the proposal would be of educational benefit to pupils, and that HMle had confirmed this assessment. The proposal would specifically provide better opportunities for increased peer contact and interaction for pupils, increased opportunities for age appropriate and focused educational delivery, more opportunity for interaction with peers, the opportunity to create more viable cohorts of pupils for participation in team events, and increased access to a range of teaching staff. She added that she had listened to and examined all the issues and concerns raised, and was of the view that all these issues and concerns could be addressed. She referred to the financial implications, and said that the anticipated savings would assist with meeting the overall savings required without impacting on service delivery, and would provide an opportunity to deliver a more effective and sustainable education service within the current financial policy framework.

In response to a query, she confirmed that of the 188 written responses received through the Consultation Process, at least 30 were from outwith Shetland.

Mr A T J Cooper moved that the Committee recommend that the North Roe Primary School be retained, and that the Chief Executive and his management team identify sustainable savings options from across the revenue budgets equivalent to the cost of keeping the school open, and that these be considered by the Council no later than the autumn.

Mrs C H J Miller seconded.

Mr L Angus moved that the Committee approve the recommendations in the report, and Mr A G L Duncan seconded.

During the discussion that followed, Members speaking in support of the motion highlighted the following points:

- The school was at the heart of the community, for all ages, and had provided stability and high-quality teaching and attainment levels over the years. It was an exemplar of how a school could be part of a community. The interaction with the wider community was a positive feature of small schools that should not be lost.

- The Scottish Government had identified that very remote rural schools were subject to special provisions. Three factors had to be taken into consideration – the availability of an alternative, the likely effect on the community, and the likely effect of travel arrangements. It was felt that not enough consideration had been given to these three factors.
- North Roe was a vulnerable community and, in economic development terms, was classed as fragile. In terms of deprivation, it was classed as the fifth-worst area in Shetland. There had been little investment by the Council in the area over the last 40 years.
- Commuting was now more expensive and closure of the school would take away the main motivation for people to live in the area. The remoteness of the area meant that there were considerable distances for people to travel to employment etc outwith the area.
- The Council was required to maintain communities at the periphery, and it was likely that the cost of this would exceed the savings realised by closing the school.
- North Roe was not in a position to benefit from the aquaculture industry as it lay within Sullom Voe harbour limits and therefore aquaculture developments were not permitted. There was very little full-time employment in the area.
- Comparisons with the consolidation of the schools estate in the South Mainland were not appropriate, as the South Mainland had experienced growth as a result of the development of Sumburgh Airport.
- The socio-economic study had concluded that the closure of the school would seriously affect the sustainability of the community.
- Access to out-of-school activities would likely decrease as not all parents had cars or were in a position to collect their children from school.

Members speaking in support of the amendment drew attention to the following points:

- Officers and consultants had expressed the view that the proposal would have no detrimental impact on pupil's educational experiences.
- It was questionable that schools should be classified as the 'heart' of a community, and it was noted that other facilities such as community halls complemented schools.
- No child would receive a worse education as a result of consolidating the schools' estate - it had actually been identified that educational opportunities would be enhanced and improved. However there would be a detrimental impact on service delivery if savings were sought from elsewhere.
- A school roll of eight was not sustainable in terms of educational provision.
- The Council was required to provide equality of provision and opportunities, and there would be less money available for all pupils in Shetland if the

proposal was not approved. Recent reductions in schools' equipment budgets had illustrated the effect of the failure to make savings.

- There were potentially very serious effects should the Council not make the required savings. Its reserves were at the mercy of world markets and had dwindled by another £2.9million over the course of a week. When consideration was given to sums that may also have to be paid to Lerwick Port Authority as a result of court action, and the potential liability of £8million in relation to the Shetland Towage pension fund, it may be necessary for the savings of £38million to be found rather than £25-26million. If the Council did not balance its budgets, the Government had the power to send in commissioners to run some of its services, and they may look at making much wider reductions to the schools' estate.
- No detrimental impacts to communities that had already experienced school closures had been recorded.
- Abandoned school buildings could be placed on the open market, and a number of uses for previous schools had been found.
- The decline in the school roll indicated that having a school in the community was not necessarily a factor in retaining families in the area.
- The Audit Commission had identified that there was little evidence that Members acted in the interests of Shetland as a whole, and failure to approve the recommendations would illustrate this.

In response to some of the issues raised, the Head of Schools confirmed that much consideration had been given to viable alternatives to closure, and she outlined a number of the measures that had already been taken forward. However it had not been possible to identify any further savings without examining the schools' estate.

Mr W H Manson moved that voting take place by roll call, and the Committee unanimously agreed.

After summing up, voting accordingly took place by roll call, and the result was as follows:

Motion (Mr A T J Cooper)	Amendment (Mr L Angus)
Mrs L F Baisley Mr A T J Cooper Mr A T Doull Mrs I J Hawkins Mr R S Henderson Mr W H Manson Mrs C H J Miller Mr F A Robertson Mr G Robinson Mr J G Simpson Mr C L Smith	Mr L Angus Mr J Budge Mr A G L Duncan Mrs F B Grains Mr J H Henry Mr R C Nickerson Dr J WG Wills Mr A S Wishart
11	8

Decision:

The Committee **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** that Shetland Islands Council approve that:

1. the North Roe Primary School be retained
2. that the Chief Executive and his management team identify sustainable savings options from across the revenue budgets equivalent to the cost of keeping the school open, and that these be considered by the Council no later than the Autumn.

46/11

Blueprint for Education in Shetland: Decision on Sandness Primary School

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Schools (Appendix 4).

The Head of Schools summarised the main terms of the report, highlighting the number of written responses received. She pointed out that whilst parents and respondents did not want to see the school closed, they had agreed that they would want their children to attend Happyhansel Primary School rather than Aith Junior High School Primary Department should the proposal be approved. She went on to say she considered there would be no detrimental impact to the educational experience of pupils, and that HMle had confirmed this assessment. It was felt that the proposal would specifically assist with the elimination of a transition from nursery to primary education, provide daily access to a larger peer group, create a more viable cohort of children for a variety of group and team activities, provide increased opportunities for age appropriate and focused educational delivery, and increase access to a range of teaching staff. She added that she had listened to and examined all the issues and concerns raised, and was of the view that all these issues and concerns could be addressed. She referred to the financial implications, and said that the anticipated savings would assist with meeting the overall savings target without impacting on service delivery, and would provide an opportunity to deliver a more effective and sustainable service within the current policy framework.

Mr F A Robertson moved that the Committee recommend that Sandness Primary School remain open.

Mr G Robinson seconded, with the addition that the Chief Executive and his management team identify sustainable savings options from across the revenue budgets equivalent to the cost of keeping the school open, and that these be considered by the Council no later than the Autumn.

Mr F A Robertson agreed to incorporate this into his motion.

Dr J W G Wills moved, as an amendment, that the Committee approve the recommendations in the report.

Mr A G L Duncan seconded.

During the discussion that followed, Members speaking in support of the motion highlighted the following points:

- The Sandness community was very remote, linked to Walls by an eight-mile single-track road that was not scheduled for improvements. There was also limited mobile phone coverage in the area and no houses along a long stretch of the road, which had implications should there be an accident.
- An HIE study had indicated that Sandness was one of the four most fragile areas in Shetland.
- In recent years the community had lost its shop and Post Office, and the school really was the main focus of the community. It had demonstrated high attainment levels over the years.
- There was a viable younger community in Sandness, with a 22% increase in population since 2008, and 16 children of pre-school age.
- Estimated transport costs had been based on a mini bus for 16 pupils, but the school roll may exceed this in a few years.
- The key purpose of the Single Outcome Agreement was to “maintain the number of economically active people throughout Shetland”, and this was therefore a responsibility of the Council.
- The socio-economic study indicated that the continuing presence of the primary school was a significant factor in the longer-term viability of the community. People moved into Sandness because of the job opportunities that were developing and had developed there, and would be less likely to move to the area if there was no school.
- The proposal was driven by financial considerations, and the socio-economic study had indicated that the savings resulting from the school closure would be more in the region of £23,500.
- All Council housing in the area was occupied, and there may be a loss of rental income to the Council should people leave the area.
- Happyhansel Primary School was recognised as being one of the poorest buildings in the schools’ estate, so it was not the case that pupils would be going to a better school. Improvements to this school were not scheduled until 2013 and, by that time, capacity may not be sufficient.
- There had been a marked turn around in the community, and it was important not to stifle this.
- This had been the third time in recent years that the community had to fight to keep their school, and it detracted from other things in the community.

Members speaking in support of the amendment drew attention to the following points:

- The educational benefits to the pupils had been illustrated, and HMle had agreed that there was likely to be no detrimental impact on the children's educational experiences.
- If the proposal was not agreed it was likely that in future there would be little money available for visiting specialist teachers, transport and school activities.
- The Council had agreed to undertake improvements to Happyhansel Primary School.
- Despite the increase in the pre-school population in the area, it is still the case that school rolls are falling. The exception to this is Lerwick, where a substantial number of placing requests are received for rural pupils. It was necessary for Members to think of the wider situation in Shetland and to strike a reasonable balance for all pupils in Shetland.
- During the Blueprint for Education process, staff and consultants had tried as far as possible to consolidate the schools' estate into sustainable units that would be well resourced and efficiently run.
- The Council was facing real financial problems, and no alternatives to the savings required had been identified. It may be the case that, in future, consideration would have to be given to closing Junior High Schools. Failure to approve the proposal would be creating additional financial problems for the Council and acting against the advice of officers.
- The Accounts Commission had highlighted that Councillors had a marked tendency to represent narrow interests of their wards at the expense of their wider role. Failure to approve the proposal would confirm this.
- It was important that rural schools were viable, and very small schools did not offer the best educational experience and opportunities for pupils.
- Small rural schools often depend on neighbouring schools to assist them in operating.
- If the school roll did increase to 19, it is possible that there would be a detrimental educational experience for pupils, as it would remain a one-teacher school.
- Failure to approve the proposal would result in an additional financial burden for all pupils in Shetland and could result in a marked decrease in standards in future years.
- Members had responsibilities over and above the schools in their own areas.

Mr W H Manson moved that voting take place by roll call, and the Committee unanimously agreed.

After summing up, voting accordingly took place by roll call, and the result was as follows:

Motion (Mr F A Robertson)	Amendment (Dr J W G Wills)
Mrs L F Baisley Mr A T J Cooper Mr A T Doull Mrs I J Hawkins Mr R S Henderson Mr J H Henry Mr W H Manson Mrs C H J Miller Mr F A Robertson Mr G Robinson Mr J G Simpson Mr C L Smith Mr A S Wishart	Mr L Angus Mr J Budge Mr A G L Duncan Mrs F B Grains Mr R C Nickerson Dr J W G Wills
13	6

Decision:

The Committee **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to Shetland Islands Council that:

1. Sandness Primary School remain open.
2. the Chief Executive and his management team identify sustainable savings options from across the revenue budgets equivalent to the cost of keeping the school open, and that these be considered by the Council no later than the Autumn.

The meeting concluded at 1.30pm.

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E L Fullerton
Chairperson